

March 7, 2012

Michelle Slimak
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Labor and Public Employees Committee
Room 3800, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106
860-240-0540

Re: 3/13/12 Agenda 2. S.B. No. 352 RAISED) AN ACT CREATING A PROCESS FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS TO COLLECTIVELY BARGAIN WITH THE STATE. 2:30 PM in Room 1B of the LOB

I am AGAINST of An Act Creating A Process For Family Child Care Providers To Collectively Bargain With The State.

TO: CO- Chairman, The Hon. Edith Prague, Co-Chair, The Hon. Zeke Zalaski, Vice-Chair, The Hon. Edwin Gomes, Vice-Chair, The Hon. Ezequiel Santiago, Ranking Member, The Hon. Anthony Guglielmo, Ranking Member, The Hon. John Rigby, Member, The Hon. Bill Aman, Member, The Hon. Lou Esposito, Member, The Hon. Ernest Hewett, Member, The Hon. David Kiner, The Member, Craig Miner

My name is Michelle Slimak and I am a home daycare provider in Southington. I am writing to you today to let you know how I feel about the unionization of home daycare providers. It is my understanding that Executive orders 9 & 10 not only allow the unionization of home providers who accept Care For Kids, but that they leave open the possibility of unionizing all childcare providers, including those who work at centers, and those who do not accept C4K. I strongly oppose a union representation of home daycare providers, who are essentially small business owners. I am not against Unions in general, my husband works for Sikorsky, and the union is helpful to him in his employee/employer relationship issues. I am opposed to the union in my situation because there is no employee/employer relationship to mediate.

As a small business owner, I set my own hours, vacation schedule, and rate of pay. I currently charge \$190 a week for full time, and I have the opportunity to accept 6 children full time, and 3 before and after school. As my youngest is in first grade, I can accept 2 of those three as paying slots. This means that if I run my business well, and I am able to fill all my slots, I can see an income of \$1340 per week, before expenses and taxes. I also have 2 weeks of paid vacation written into my contract, and I have sick days available if needed.

I am fortunate to have health insurance thru my husband, but many people are not, and at one time, we did not have that option. At that time, we simply paid for individual health insurance. Was this an inexpensive option? No, it was not, however, it was less expensive than having to pay for each dr visit, and the possibility of a medical emergency which we would have had to pay out of pocket.

As for the quality of my daycare, I agree that there should be more educational requirements for those caring for young children. The human brain grows more and learns more in the first 5 years than in any other time in life. I currently hold a BA in Psychology from CCSU, and I have more than 18 credits in early childhood, with which I have earned a head teacher certificate from Ct Charts a Course. I am currently the co-chair of the Early Childhood Collaborative of Southington, the mission of which is to ensure all Southington children enter school ready to learn. As such, I attend approximately 9 workshop every year, gathering CEU's I am not required to have in CT. (Ct only requires center employees and nursery school employees to earn CEU's every year, it does not require home daycare providers to do the same). I am also a member of the Southington Daycare Providers Association, and attend workshops and educational opportunities with them as well.

The NAFCC (National Association of Family Child Care, which is to home daycares as NAEYC is to centers) offers an accreditation program for home daycares. Many states offer financial assistance or

scholarships for family childcare providers to achieve national accreditation. Unfortunately CT does not, and the cost is over \$1000 for the initial accreditation, and hundreds of dollars to renew. Although this is something I would consider, I cannot see how it would help me make more money, and the initial outlay of funds is prohibitive.

The union representatives I have spoken to, and those I have heard speak at informational sessions, have claimed that by voting for the union home daycare providers will get more money and become state employees. No offense, but I am not interested in being a state employee. I am also not sure how raising the reimbursement rates at C4K will get me more money. C4K is a subsidy program for low income parents, not for providers. The reason C4K sends the subsidy checks to parents is because there were cases of parents taking the checks and not paying the providers. If C4K raises the subsidy rates, they will have to either get more money to support the families they currently have, or they will have to decrease the number of families served. Either way, I will not get more money. I currently have one family that receives a C4K subsidy. That family has been with me for over a year, and C4K has changed their subsidy more than once. They currently pay \$130 a week for a three day week at daycare. C4K pays \$15 a week, so the family has to pay \$115 a week. When C4K paid \$75 a week, the family had to pay \$55 a week. The total always has to equal my current charge. No matter how much C4K is willing to subsidize, the family will always have to pay the difference between the subsidy and my rate. My rate does not go down just because someone is low income, just as my rate does not go up if a family appears to be affluent. There is no sliding scale.

In closing, I would like you, as my representative, to take into account all I have written, when making any decisions regarding the unionization of childcare providers in CT.

Thank you,

Michelle Slimak

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